

Nature Notes



News and Events from the Missouri Department of Conservation • January/February/March 2015

Fall Deer Season

Youth hunters share their success

A wise man once told me he was a supporter of conservation because he liked to see the joy it brought to the faces of young hunters. He is right; the joy seen in the success of a young hunter is comparable to coming out of your room on Christmas morning to see what Santa left for you. Our department spends thousands of man-hours each year working to make youth hunting a reality. We hold clinics and offer classes and camps, but they are nothing compared to the special experiences of a young hunter with a parent or mentor out into the woods. I want to thank these young hunters for sharing their stories from this fall's Youth Deer Hunt!

—Marsha Jones
Conservation Agent

The Mack Daddy Buck

It was November 1, 2014, opening day of youth deer season. My dad and I got up at 5:30 a.m. and headed out the door. When we got to our blind and settled down, we started to hear noises around us. You could hear birds chirping and squirrels moving.

I told Dad that I heard leaves rustle like it was a deer or a bigger animal. Dad raised his binoculars and saw a

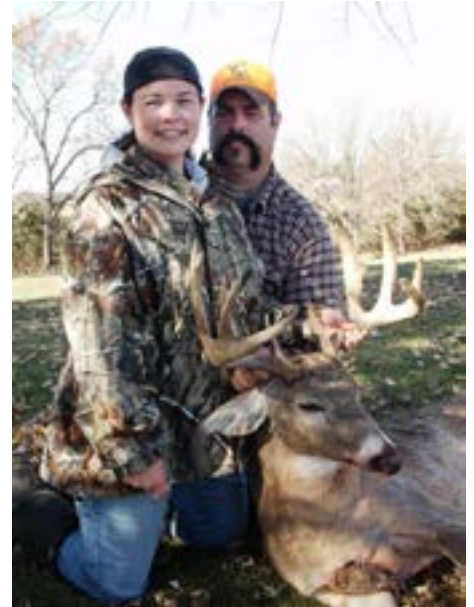
small 8 point buck. He asked if I wanted to shoot it, but I decided to wait for a bigger one. We watched the buck move on for a few minutes. Just then, Dad saw something coming up the fence line. All he could see in the binoculars was the width of the buck's rack and the length of his tines.

Dad knew was that this buck was a good one. Dad whispered to me, saying, "Get the gun up and get ready to shoot." I pulled up my 7mm 08 and got ready for the buck to move in front of me. The buck came in front of me at about 75 yards. I turned the safety off and looked through the scope. With no time to get shook up, I shot right above his shoulder in the perfect spot.

We saw the buck jump and run off towards the ditch. A few seconds later we heard a crash. We waited about fifteen or twenty minutes before we went to look for him. When we got to the ditch, Dad said he could see the backside of the buck. We went down to the edge of the creek and Dad said "I'm sorry, Sis, he's not as big as I thought" with a disappointed look on his face. He really knew better.

I looked over the edge and started to scream with excitement. All I saw was a massive 10 point lying dead in the creek. I couldn't stop smiling. I started to call and send pictures to everybody I knew. I was so happy because it was the biggest buck that I have ever killed or even seen!

We went to get gas before heading



Whitney and her father with Whitney's "Mack Daddy" buck

to grandpa's house. People at the gas station were taking pictures; everybody wanted to see it. I felt like a movie star on the Outdoor Channel. Thank you, Missouri Department of Conservation, for having a youth season so kids like me have the chance of getting a buck like Mack Daddy.

—Whitney, age 15

More stories from the Fall 2014 Youth Deer Season can be found on page 6.

All Missouri Department of Conservation Offices will be closed for the following holidays:

New Year's Day-January 1, 2015
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day-January 19, 2015
Lincoln's Birthday-February 12, 2015
President's Day-February 16, 2015

Northeast Regional Office and Interpretive Center

3500 S. Baltimore, Kirksville, MO 63501 • mdc.mo.gov/node/279



The Northeast Regional Office and Interpretive Center is located just south of Kirksville on Hwy 63. Come inside to enjoy exhibits, attend programs, purchase permits, and pick up free conservation brochures. Head outside to walk the habitat trail or fish in the stocked pond.

HOURS

Building:

Monday-Friday, 8 AM-5 PM

Trail and Pond:

Daily, 4 AM-10 PM

TO REGISTER FOR A PROGRAM

Programs are free. Call 660-785-2420 to sign up for a program requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel as a courtesy to those on the waiting list.

January Events

Knee High Naturalists Raptor Review

January 5 • Monday

10:30–11:30 AM

No registration required (ages 3-6)

What do bald eagles, vultures, hawks, and owls have in common? They are all raptors! Raptors share many specific features, but each kind plays a different role in the ecosystem. Join us to learn about Missouri's fearsome flying predators!

Creature Feature Tracking Tales

January 14 • Wednesday

3:30–4:30 PM

No registration required (ages 7-12)

Most wild animals are shy around humans, so they can be difficult to spot unless you have lots of patience. Luckily, they often leave tracks and signs that can tell you their story.

Conservation Keepers Birding Basics

January 17 • Saturday • 1–2 PM

No registration required (all ages)

Birding is one of the most popular outdoor activities in Missouri. Join us to find out how to get the most out of your binoculars, learn what to look for when viewing birds and practice identifying some Missouri birds!

Basics of Trout Fishing Truman State University Farm

January 20 • Tuesday

6:00–9:00 PM

Registration required (all ages)

This class will focus on the history, habitat, life cycle, and equipment it takes to catch rainbow trout in Missouri's waterways. Participants will also learn about where they can further their trout fishing skills and enjoy some of Missouri's state parks. Anyone under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

Creature Feature Where's the Water?

January 28 • Wednesday

3:30–4:30 PM

No registration required (ages 7-12)

All living things depend on water, from microorganisms to the largest mammals. In this class, we will learn about the different forms and locations in which water can

be found. We will also discover how water moves through the environment.

Clarksville Eagle Days

January 24-25

Saturday, 9 AM–4 PM

Sunday, 10:00–3:00 PM

No registration required (all ages)

Visit Clarksville for winter viewing of bald eagles on the Mississippi River! Spotting scopes are available on the river and live eagle displays will take place throughout the event.

February Events

Knee High Naturalists Where's the Water

February 2 • Monday

10:30–11:30 AM

No registration required (ages 3-6)

All living things need water, no matter how big or small they are. Water can be found in lots of places and has many forms. Join us for a story and craft that will help us discover how water moves through the environment.

Fishing Program Volunteer Instructor Training

February 7 • Saturday

9:00 AM–2:00 PM

Registration required (adults)

Volunteer instructors will be taught curriculum and receive tips from current instructors. Anyone



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passionate about fishing and interested in passing it on to future generations is encouraged to attend!

Prescribed Burn Workshop Knox Co. USDA Service Center

February 7 • Saturday
9:00 AM–3:00 PM

Registration required (adults)

Landowners can learn to use prescribed fire to boost wildlife habitat and reduce undesirable plants at this workshop. Includes a classroom session and demonstration burn. For more information or to register for the workshop, contact John Pinkowski at 660-397-2223, ext. 117.

Creature Feature Chew, Chomp, Gnaw

February 11 • Wednesday
3:30–4:30 PM

No registration required (ages 7-12)

Mammals have different types of teeth, and each type has a purpose. Learn about the different types and purposes and use that information to classify mammal skulls at this program!

Conservation Keepers Life in the Wild

February 21 • Saturday • 1–2 PM

No registration required (all ages)

Modern tools and inventions make wilderness survival much easier, but what was it like before those

inventions? Take a look at primitive survival skills and get some hands-on experience at this program.

Creature Feature Web of Life

February 25 • Wednesday
3:30–4:30 PM

No registration required (ages 7-12)

All of the living things in an ecosystem are connected to each other through the flow of energy. Join us to discover how this web of life works.

March Events

Knee High Naturalists Building a Chain

March 2 • Monday
10:30–11:30 AM

No registration required (ages 3-6)

Plants grow from sunlight and animals grow from eating. Find out how they are connected to each other in food chains at this program!

Creature Feature Hide and Seek

March 11 • Wednesday
3:30–4:30 PM

No registration required (ages 7-12)

Camouflage is one way animals protect themselves in nature. We will talk about how different animals use camouflage and have some activities to test our seeking skills.

Knee High Naturalists Flutter By, Butterfly

March 16 • Monday
10:30–11:30 AM

No registration required (ages 3-6)

We will follow the changes that turn a tiny insect egg into a beautiful fluttering butterfly with a story. We will also have a craft and look for caterpillars and butterflies outside.

Conservation Keepers Take a Hike

March 21 • Saturday • 10 AM–?

No registration required (all ages)

We will start with a classroom session to discuss equipment and safety requirements for a day hike. After a break for lunch, we will meet at Big Creek Conservation Area for a short hike.

Evening With Wildlife Bowling Green High School

March 18 • Tuesday
6:00–8:30 PM

No registration required (all ages)

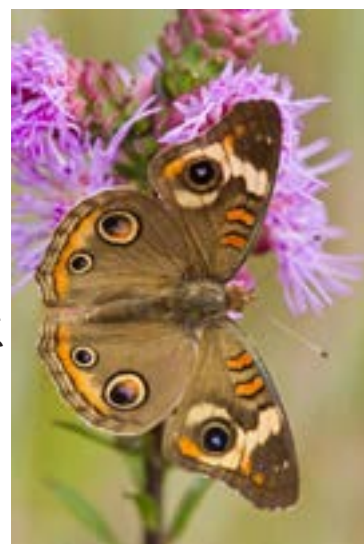
Join us for the Northeast Region's annual Evening With Wildlife. Live animals, pelts, demonstrations, and guest speakers will be part of this evening of conservation exploration.

Creature Feature Reptiles Rock

March 26 • Wednesday
3:30–4:30 PM

No registration required (ages 7-12)

From the quick lizard hiding under a rock to the turtle basking on a log, reptiles captivate us. Meet some live reptiles and discover what makes them unique at this program.



Common buckeye, *Junonia coenia*



Hannibal Conservation Office

8965 Hwy 36 Suite 1, Hannibal, MO 63401

Hannibal Area Events

Fishing Program Volunteer Instructor Training

January 24 • Saturday

9:00 AM–2:00 PM

Registration required (adults)

Volunteer instructors will be taught curriculum and receive tips from current instructors. Anyone passionate about fishing and interested in passing it on to future generations is encouraged to attend! This training will meet in the Homebank Community Room at 3817 McMasters Avenue, Hannibal.

Ice Fishing 101

January 31 • Saturday

8:00 AM–1:00 PM

Registration required (all ages)

Gain the basic knowledge and safety precautions to spend a day fishing on the ice at this program. After the lesson, venture outside to try out your newly learned skills (weather permitting). This program will be held at Hunnewell Lake Conservation Area on Highway Z north of Hunnewell, MO. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Basics of Trout Fishing

February 10 • Tuesday

6:00–9:00 PM

Registration required (all ages)

Discover the history, habitat, and life cycle of rainbow trout along with learning about the equipment needed for trout fishing at this program. Find out where you can go to further your trout fishing skills while enjoying Missouri's state parks. We will meet at the Hannibal Conservation Office. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Program registration:

Register for any of these programs by contacting the Hannibal Conservation Office at 573-248-2530.



Lake sturgeon, *Acipenser fulvescens*, have moved in at the Hannibal Conservation Office

Dinosaurs at my Desk

I like to poke fun at my MDC family here at the Hannibal office (and some at other offices) about being old enough to remember when dinosaurs roamed the earth. I especially enjoy joking about Mike's "grandpa truck" and Lenora's ancient microfiche thingamabob. At times, I can't resist asking for a repeat when they say things like phone book or VHS tape. They are all very good sports and we share a lot of laughs. My co-workers were the oldest things in the office until the middle of September, when I became the adoptive mother of some juvenile lake sturgeon.

I knew Travis Moore, our Fisheries Management Stegosaurus (Biologist), was going to Lost Valley Hatchery in Warsaw, Missouri to lead the tagging efforts for lake sturgeon. I decided it would be the perfect time to have the "Sturgeon Surgeon" bring us back some

babies. I was pretty excited, so I started doing my homework.

Everything needed to be just right, from tank location to the temperature of the water. In my studies, I found out that lake sturgeon get enormous—as large as 6 feet long and 200 pounds! They eat insect larvae, snails, clams, crayfish, and other invertebrates. Equipped with this knowledge, we set up their tank with all the perfect gear in the perfect location, right next to my desk.

I find myself watching them with interest more often than I imagined I would. I ponder the mystery of why they exhibit their porpoising behavior, wonder exactly how much sand they must eat when slurping up shrimp and whether or not they are pondering my silly behaviors too. They are quite often the topic of conversation when we have guests. I enjoy sharing what I have

learned with every inquisitive visitor.

I asked Travis how we would know whether they are male or female. His response was, "We won't know until they are about the size of your desk." This sent my curiosity off the deep end as I began to wonder exactly how old my new charges would eventually grow to be. As it turns out, lake sturgeons live to be about 55 years old for males and up to 150 years old for females! The most insane part is that they have been around for approximately 136 million years!

I have real live dinosaurs living at my desk, and they fit right in with the other dinosaurs milling around our office. I invite you all to come visit us and see our ancient guests!

Rachel Villarreal
Administrative Staff Assistant

Fun and Free

Stop by the MDC Northeast Regional Office in Kirksville during office hours to check out a Discover Nature backpack. These backpacks give you a self-guided tour of the natural world as you walk the habitat trail.

Backpacks can be checked out at the front desk. Each backpack is loaded with tools and information to enhance your experience, from magnifiers and measuring tapes to field guides and a nature journal.



Northeast Nature Notes is available by mail, e-mail, and on the MDC website.

To be added to the mail or e-mail registry, or to switch from one to the other, please contact Amanda Moore at amanda.moore@mdc.mo.gov or call 660-785-2420.

The online version of the newsletter is available at mdc.mo.gov/node/17875.

A full event calendar for the Northeast region is also available on the MDC website.

Ask the Naturalist

I had two snake identification requests this fall. The first was from Eric, who had found a juvenile snake that he did not recognize in his yard. The snake had smooth stripes of cream and grey, and its scales were keeled (had a raised ridge along the center of each scale).

For snake identification, I always check MDC's free publication "Snakes of Missouri" first. Only one snake came close to matching Eric's snake—the Graham's crayfish snake. I verified the ID with Krista Noel, our Natural History Biologist.

The Graham's crayfish snake is a secretive snake that feeds on freshly molted crayfish. They are semi-aquatic, so often shelter in hidden spots near streams and wetlands and overwinter in crayfish burrows. Adult crayfish snakes can be 18-28 inches long.

The other request started with a phone call from Amy. "Can you come get a snake?" Of course I can! She tells me that her family found a small snake outside of their church. They would like to know what it is.

The snake was around 6 inches long and had a pattern of dark blotches down the back and sides with black blocks scattered down its belly. I did not recognize it immediately, so I grabbed my snake publication again.

The prairie kingsnake and the juvenile black rat snake have similar markings, so the simple guide was not enough to get a definite identification. I felt prairie kingsnake was more likely because of the reddish tint to the markings, but wanted to be sure.

Further research gave me two characteristics that would tell me which snake it was. The black rat snake has slightly keeled scales and a divided anal plate. The prairie kingsnake has smooth scales and a single anal plate. I checked the snake again; it was definitely a prairie kingsnake.

Prairie kingsnakes are common throughout Missouri. They are immune to the venom of copperheads, cottonmouths, and rattlesnakes and are known to feed on those and other

snakes. They will also eat lizards, small rodents, and even birds.

Your questions and identification requests are always welcome!

- Amanda Moore
Naturalist



Above: Prairie kingsnake, *Lampropeltis calligaster*



Left: Graham's crayfish snake, *Regina grahamii*

Hunter Education

mdc.mo.gov/node/3722



These free courses are required for anyone born on or after January 1, 1967, who wants to hunt with firearms in Missouri. Hunters under 15 years of age who will be hunting with a properly permitted hunter age 18 or over, hunters that are 16 or older and have an Apprentice Hunter Authorization, or landowners or lessees hunting on land that they own or reside upon are exempted from the hunter education requirement. Anyone age 11 or older may take the hunter education course and become certified.

There are two parts of the hunter education requirements, knowledge and skills. The knowledge portion can be completed through one of three options. An online course is available, as well as a self-study guide and a classroom session. Once the knowledge portion is completed, hunters must attend and pass a 4-hour skills session to become hunter education certified. Registration for classes is available online.

If you have any questions about hunter education, please contact Outdoor Skills Specialist Rob Garver by calling 660-785-2420.

Educator's Corner

mdc.mo.gov/node/92

Project Learning Tree Workshop

March 14, 2015

9:00 AM - 3:30 PM (lunch provided)

Registration for this workshop is required. Contact Karen Armstrong at karen.armstrong@mdc.mo.gov or by calling (660) 785-2420 to register. The deadline for registration is March 13.

Fee: \$20.00, to be paid on the day of the workshop

- Project Learning Tree is for educators who work with youth, grades K-12, using hands-on interdisciplinary activities.
- Project Learning Tree includes topics on forestry, wildlife, soil, air, and water.
- Helps teach children to be stewards of the land and to improve their understanding of conservation and the wise use of our natural resources.



Dodge Hunting

I woke up and got dressed. We went to the Dodge diesel truck and went to the deer blind. We waited for an hour and saw a four-point buck. It stopped in a weird stance. I aimed for the heart, but it hit him in the shoulder and went through the heart. He ran into some tall weeds. We called Jeff, the landowner, to come down and get us. We went in the mud, got the truck muddy and ripped the license plate off the front. We got there, parked the truck, and got out to look for the blood. Jeff told me to find a trail of blood. I said I did not find any blood, but I found the deer and drug it out of the weeds. Jeff taught me how to dress the deer. We took it to the garage and took off the skin and got the meat, and then Jeff, Amanda, and I bagged the meat.

—Grady, age 10



Grady and Amanda with Grady's four-point buck



Sunday Night

On November 2, 2014, I was hunting with my dad, my sister Hailee, and Steve Feeney. We were hunting next to a bean field. Hailee was sitting with Feeney and I was with my dad. We found a spot in the brush to sit down. We sat on the ground. It was a very windy day. We saw a nice buck on the neighbor's property, so I couldn't shoot it.

About an hour later six does came walking towards us, so my dad says, "Kylee get ready." I got my gun up and put the cross hairs on the biggest one in the front and BANG! My dad said, "You got it!" I was very happy. It was my second deer that I have gotten.

My deer ran off and fell over. A couple minutes later a BIG buck walked about fifteen yards from me and my dad. It looked very curious and started to move his head around. It was looking straight at us and my Dad told me not to move. We didn't want to scare it away.

After the buck walked away, me and my Dad went and found my deer. I was



Kylee, Hailee, and their dad with Kylee's big doe

VERY HAPPY!! We then went and found Hailee because we heard her shoot her gun. Hailee had shot at a deer and hit it, but we could not find any blood. Hailee was happy for me that I got a deer and mad that we couldn't find hers.

We then went and tagged my deer

and put it on the trailer. We took it to Granny and PaPa's house to show them. Hailee and I enjoy hunting with our dad. It is something that we will always do and remember.

—Kylee, age 10



Clarksville Eagle Days

Saturday, January 24, 2014

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Sunday, January 25, 2014

10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Clarksville, Missouri

Lock and Dam 24

Visit Clarksville for winter viewing of bald eagles on the Mississippi River! Spotting scopes are available on the river and live eagle programs will take place throughout the event. There will also be activities for kids, so bring the whole family. All activities will take place at the Apple Shed or River Front Park. There will even be a bonfire to help take the chill off, but please remember to dress for the weather and bring your binoculars!

For more information, contact Karen Armstrong at 660-785-2420.



discover nature programs . . .

- Help Missourians discover and explore nature
- Provide expert instruction and hands-on activities
- Are available statewide

